

Dutch Reformed Church  
132 Grand Street  
Newburgh  
Orange County  
New York

HABS No. NY-6221

HABS

NY

36-NEWB

12-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

HABS No. NY-6221

HABS  
NY,  
36-NEW  
12-  
(Page 1)

Location: 132 Grand Street (northeast corner of Grand and Third Streets), Newburgh, Orange County, New York

Present Owner: City of Newburgh

Present Occupant: Unoccupied.

Significance: Exceptionally fine Greek Revival Church, designed by Alexander Jackson Davis, and the only known remaining Greek Revival Church designed by Davis.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1835-1837. The Cornerstone was laid on October 22, 1835 and the church was dedicated on December 7, 1837.
2. Architect: Alexander Jackson Davis with Russell Warren, Davis' partner, as superintendent in the early months of construction. (A. J. Davis Papers, Minutes of Consistory, Sept. 1 and 22, 1835)

3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the property on which the structure stands.

1835 Deed, dated May 5, 1835, recorded May 26, 1835.  
Abraham M. Smith and Aaron Belknap and wife  
To  
Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Newburgh

1839 Deed dated April 29, 1830.  
Master of Chancery (Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Newburgh)  
To  
Daniel Farrington (purchased for \$10,053.00 on behalf of creditors)

1839 Deed dated May 18, 1839.  
Daniel Farrington  
To  
Matthew V.B. Fowler

1859 Deed dated May 23, 1859.  
Mathew V.B. Fowler  
To  
Consistory of Dutch Reformed Church

c1970 Bought by the City of Newburgh

4. Builders, suppliers: Jerard & Halsey, masons, Alvah Whitmarsh, of Brooklyn, carpenter; Hill & Ball, tinnerns, Farrington and Lander supervised the completion of the project.
5. Original plans and construction: No original plans have been located, but a handwritten manuscript by A. J. Davis describing the church is in the collection of the New York Public Library, Manuscript Division, A. J. Davis Papers, Box 2. A transcript of that manuscript follows.

Description of the Dutch Reformed Church, Newburgh, written by Alexander J. Davis, probably in October 1835, at the request of the Rev. William Cruickshank (see the latter's letter to Davis, 14 of Oct. 1835). Unsigned, but in Davis' handwriting. (New York Public Library, Manuscript Division, A. J. Davis Papers, Box 2)

Sent to rev. Cruickshank

Church of Newburgh

This edifice is situated at the head of street where said street intersects with . It is

This edifice occupies a commanding situation, on the N. E. and streets. There is a considerable area around it, the lot being ft. long and ft broad. The building is 50 ft. wide, 50 ft high, and 100 ft. long, including the portico. Owing to the descent of ground E[ast], the basement line or pavement of the portico is nearly on a level with the top of the buildings between it and the river, so that the full effect of its architecture may be seen while passing the town, and the gigantic portico, and lofty dome, surmounted by a copy of the "lanthorn of Demosthenes," alias the monument of Lysicrates, at Athens, will henceforth serve as a conspicuous and characteristic landmark, indicative of the refined taste, discrimination, and sense of classical beauty of at least a few of the inhabitants of Newburgh.

The form is that of a Greek prostyle temple, with a tetrastyle Ionic portico. It is composed from the two acknowledged best examples of Athenian Architecture, the detail from the temple on the Ilissus, and the general proportion from the tetrastyle portico of the triune temple of Erectheus, Minerva Polios and Pandrosus in the Acropolis of Athens. The interior is plain. The ceiling is formed on a low segment of a circle, passing transversely from side to side, and is filled with deeply recessed coffers or panels, the styles, or intervals between, forming ribs intersecting one another at right angles to the void below. A gallery, supported by bronzed columns, is introduced in the usual manner, and a pulpit without moulding or panel, but rich in imitation of bronze, marble and gold. The exterior is in most respects similar to that of the Church of the Fr. Protestants in the city of N. Y. by Ithiel Town and Alexander J. Davis, Esqrs. and the superintendence is in the care of Messrs. Russell Warren and Alexander Davis, Arch'ts. No. 31 Merchants Exchange, N. Y.

Transcribed by Jane B. Davis

6. Alterations and additions:

- by 1846     Dome and lantern removed.
- 1851-2     Parsonage built \$3,277.
- 1860       Poor accoustics caused erection of recessed pulpit.
- 1867-8     Transept added at north end - J. Harney, architect - 15 x 22 feet on each side, 20 feet high - audience room became 100 x 82 feet in width at transept - made seating for 1,000, including gallery - reopened April 19, 1868. Costs were \$22,000.
- 1870       Parsonage enlarged \$5,000.
- 1891       Parsonage repaired \$700.
- 1894       New pulpit in front of church instead of at rear plus the installation of a new organ.
- 1906       Church redecorated \$1,675.  
Widow of Urich Lockwood \$1,000 bequest began the organ fund.
- 1906       Electric lights installed \$392.
- 1907       Installation of a new roof on the church \$700.  
Renewal of cushions, rugs, carpets \$1,400.
- 1909       Interior of parsonage redecorated and plumbing improved.  
Wooden picket fence replaced by an iron one (paid for by City's use of the lawn as a reviewing stand during the Hudson-Fulton Celebrations).
- 1910       Wooden porch of portico replaced by concrete.
- 1916       Memorial window - third one from south on east side given in memory of John and Susan Van Nort by daughter.
- ?       Stairway from room west of pulpit to the lecture room (no date, except note that is was prior to 1960 - possibly subsequent to the additon of transept).
- 1919       Electrical system of lights put in parsonage.
- 1920       Old gas chandeliers in church replaced by modern electric ones \$1,400.

- 1926 General improvements plus garage in parsonage basement.
- 1942 Lighting installed in lecture room.
- 1948 Change from city's steam heat to an oil burning central furnace.
- 1948 Church and parsonage roofs twice damaged by storm repaired. Cost \$2,646.  
Exterior woodwork and masonry repaired for \$1,800.
- 1952-3 Exterior of church and parsonage painted.  
Tiling done on kitchen floor.  
Installation made of public address system in church auditorium.  
Installing of flood lights - parking area.  
Installing of telephone extension.  
Redecoration of basement ladies room  
Installation of a new double sink in kitchen in basement.
- 1960 Alterations in installing of Morris Memorial window around 1960.

B. Historical Context:

The Dutch Reformed Church was designed by Alexander Jackson Davis in 1835 for the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church. Davis had close ties with the city of Newburgh. His maternal ancestors helped to settle and develop the area; his paternal great-grandfather moved to New Windsor, just five miles south of Newburgh, in 1750. A. J. Davis' friendship with Andrew Jackson Downing, a Newburgh native, strengthened his relationship with the city. Davis designed many houses in the city, including one for Christopher Reeve, a member of the Church's building committee.

Prepared by:  
Eleni Silverman  
Architectural Historian, HABS  
May 31, 1984  
From a field report by:  
Jane B. Davies  
May 24, 1970

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Situated high on the crest of a hill overlooking the Hudson River, the Dutch Reformed Church dominated the skyline of Newburgh throughout the nineteenth

century. The design of the church, with its large portico of four giant Ionic columns (37' high) carrying a deep entablature which continues along the sides, was derived from the French Protestant Church (now lost) in New York City, designed by Town and Davis in 1831.

2. Condition of fabric: The church was in fairly good repair at the time of the field survey; some exterior repairs of column volutes and exterior painting was needed.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The one story with basement church measures 50' x 116'5" and is 50' high. The building, which is rectangular in form, has a large portico on the main facade.
2. Foundations: The foundations are of stone, three feet thick. Specifications for the building called for "split granite stone".
3. Wall construction: The walls are of rubble which has been stuccoed and marked off in deep courses.
4. Structural systems framing: Rubble bearing walls with a king-post roof truss.
5. Porches: The church has a main portico with four wooden giant Ionic columns. The columns have red sandstone bases, painted grey. The porch originally had a wooden floor which has been replaced with one of cement. The ceiling of the portico has two large crossbeams of simulated plastered wood which are hung from the roof truss.
6. Chimneys: There are two small brick chimneys.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance doorway is wooden, 30' high by 14' wide. The upper 21' is comprised of six large panels, each with eight large studs and a central recessed panel; the lower 9' comprise the entrance doors which are replacements for the original doors. The original doors are thought to have been of solid metal with large brass studded knobs. These doors are thought to have been sliding doors which may still be in the wall recesses.

There is a small door and vestibule in the west transept, and a small door and vestibule to the basement in the west areaway.

- b. Windows: There are four very tall, narrow windows on each side of the long sides of the church. The original windows were all of simply patterned colored glass. Two of the windows have been replaced by windows of memorial stained glass.

Four basement windows are plain glass, four-lights over four-lights.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof is a low pitched gable, tarpaper over metal over wood, which follows the line of the portico's pediment. The original tin roof of the building is said to have been blown off during a hurricane.
- b. Cornice: There is a wooden cornice which reads as a deep entablature wrapping around the church.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The original dome and lantern were removed by 1846.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. cellar: There is a large auditorium with a stage and small storage rooms on either side. The south end contains a kitchen, boiler room, lavatories and small storage rooms.
- b. First floor: The sanctuary occupies the entire floor except for a small entrance vestibule with doors at each side leading into the sanctuary. The sanctuary end is flanked by two transept additions which continue the line of the end wall. Pews march down the center of the nave toward the pulpit and are flanked by side aisles. A U-shaped gallery runs along the sides of the church and across the back. There are pews below the gallery.

- 2. Stairways: Two stairways curve to the gallery off the entrance to the sanctuary. They are wood with turned balusters and newels.

There is a stairway to the basement beneath the east gallery stairs and the west end of the pulpit platform.

- 3. Flooring: The main floor of the church is a modern alteration of terrazzo; the side aisles are carpeted.

The gallery floor is of wide wooden boards (probably original).

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are painted plaster with wooden wainscoting and trim.

The ceiling is hung plaster which is arched and carved to contain 38 plain coffers, each of which are 4 feet four inches square. The walls are dark blue and the gallery, wainscoting, frieze and cornice are cream.

5. Doorways and doors: Typical doors are plain paneled doors.
6. Decorative features: There is a simple cornice and a deep, rather simple frieze. The gallery has banded fascia and leaf-and-dart molding.

The removal of the organ at the front, revealed a trompe-l'oeil painting of an apse which had been whitewashed by the congregation temporarily renting the church.

7. Lighting fixtures: The lighting fixtures are all modern.

D. Site:

1. General setting: The church faces south and its situated along the crest of a hill overlooking the Hudson River.
2. Outbuilding: There is a parsonage on the southeast corner of the lot which was built in 1851.
3. Landscaping, enclosures: A landscaped lawn slopes to the south. There is a small circular parking area to the west. Hedges enclose the property on the west and south.

Prepared by:

Eleni Silverman

Architectural Historian, HABS

June 1984

From field reports by Jane B. Davies (5/70),  
Raymond A. Ruge (7/67 & 11/67), and  
Helen Ver Nooy Gearn (2/22/69)

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Old Views:

Ruttenber, Edwin M. History of the Town of Newburgh, Newburgh, 1859, p. 221 (woodcut)



Whitefield, Edwin. "View of Newburgh." Lithograph, copyrighted 1846; copy at New York Public Library, Print Department.

B. Primary and unpublished sources:

Dutch Reformed Church, Newburgh. Minutes of the Consistory, 1835-1910. (incomplete; passim)

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Print Department. A. J. Davis Collection: Davis, Alexander J. [Journal], p. 47. (Brief entry, similar to that of Day-book)

New York Historical Society, Map and Print Room. A. J. Davis Collection. Drawing #196, with legend: "D. Church, Newburgh." Cross section, showing pulpit end; ink, pencil & wash; unsigned, but in Davis' characteristic style, with his lettering.

New York Public Library, Manuscript Division. A. J. Davis Papers: Davis, Alexander J. [Day-book, v. 1], pp. 14, 26 [171, 183]. Page [171] has small elevation; xerox appended.

"Specification of the Carpenter's work and materials for a church to be built at Newburgh." Three versions of 4 p. each, the first in Davis' hand, the second and the third in a copyist's hand, with insertions in Davis' hand. (Box 5)

"Specification of Mason's work and materials for a church to be built at Newburgh." 2 p. in Davis' hand. (Box 5)

[Description of the Dutch Reformed Church] 1 p. (Box 2)  
Transcript appended.

Reeve, Christopher (member of building committee). Letter A. J. Davis, 29 July 1835. (Box 1)

Cruikshank, William (minister of the church). Letter to A. J. Davis, 14 Oct. 1835. (Box 1)

Whitemarsh, Alvah (carpenter of the church.). Letter to A. J. Davis, 16 April 1836. (Box 1)

Ruge, Raymond A. "Dutch Reformed Church, Newburgh, N. Y." 2 measured plans: main floor, with 1/2 South Elevation; and basement. July 1969, rev. May 1970. copy appended.

C. Secondary and published sources:

Alexander, Robert. "The Architecture of Russell Warren." Master's thesis, New York University, 1952, pp. 114-115.

Nutt, John J. Newburgh, Her Institutions, Industries and Leasing Citizens. Newburgh, 1891, p. 131.

Ruge, Raymond A. The Dutch Reformed Church, Newburgh, N. Y.: Feasibility study, July 1969. Newburgh 1969. (with 2 measured drawings; July 1969, rev. May 1970)

Ruttenber, Edward M. History of the Town of Newburgh, N. Y.,  
1859, pp. 219-221 (view)

\_\_\_\_\_ and Clark, Lewis H. History of Orange County.  
Philadelphia, 1881, pp. 315-316.